

Response to the 2007 Citizen Survey Results

Staff has been responding to the results of the last Citizen Survey since the spring of 2007. Based on direction from the Mayor and Council, the focus has been on neighborhoods east of Route 355. Staff's response to the survey included 1) providing a variety of needed services across the area east of Route 355 and 2) initiating more directed outreach and services in two specific geographic areas on the east side of the City.

Several departments have been involved in the response. Services provided ranged from tree trimming to pedestrian safety initiatives. The response from the community has been positive. The following lists summarize the City's efforts to respond to the 2007 survey results.

1. Improve Streetlighting

- Checked all the City maintained lights east of Route 355, repaired 20 lights, and referred 2 lights to Pepco for repair.
- Contractor trimmed the trees around the streetlights on Broadwood Drive and Twinbrook Parkway (between Veirs Mill Rd and Baltimore Rd). Light meter readings indicated that lighting improved for 27 lights (46%) after the tree trimming.
- Budgeted \$100,000 of speed camera revenue in FY09 to install new streetlights where needed east of Route 355.
- Coordinated with Pepco to have all Pepco-owned lights in the City relamped during calendar year 2009 from the existing mercury vapor bulbs to higher quality high-pressure sodium bulbs.
- Developed a good working relationship between the Department of Public Works and Pepco and communicating regularly with Pepco representatives.

2. Reduce Speeds

- Implemented the speed camera program, including a stationary camera on Baltimore Road in front of Rockville High School and mobile camera sites on Baltimore Road between Stonestreet and MD 28, on First Street near Maryvale Elementary School, and at two locations on Twinbrook Parkway between Veirs Mill Rd and Baltimore Rd.
- Conducted targeted traffic enforcement by the Traffic Safety Unit of the Police Department in school zones and in problem areas identified by resident complaints and Department intelligence.
- Included 2.0 new FTE Police Officers assigned to traffic enforcement in the FY09 Operating Budget (funded with speed camera revenue).

3. Improve Pedestrian Safety

- Monitored high volume intersections and distributed information about the traffic law to drivers who do not stop at the stop sign. Officers follow up a few days later at the same intersections with citation enforcement for those who continue to ignore the stop signs.
- Installed a new traffic Signal at Broadwood Drive and Veirs Mill Road to improve safety for pedestrians crossing Veirs Mill.
- Installed “Local Traffic Only” signs, new crosswalks and two permanent speed indicator signs to improve traffic management and pedestrian safety on Grandin Avenue.
- Installed six bus shelters along Veirs Mill Road from the shopping centers to Aspen Hill Road. Built a sidewalk link to connect the bus stop in front of the Twinbrook Mark with Atlantic Ave.
- Install a sidewalk link on Ridgeway between LeMay and Rockland next to Twinbrook Elementary School
- Installed countdown pedestrian signals at Park Road and N. Stonestreet and on Baltimore Rd. at Rockville High School.
- Provided kindergarten students pedestrian and bicycle safety training at Meadow Hall Elementary School and Twinbrook Elementary School. Hosted Walk to School Day events and trained three teachers to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety education classes.
- Budgeted \$320,000 in the FY09 CIP for Pedestrian Safety capital projects city-wide. A portion of the total will fund sidewalk installation on Viers Mill Road, Broadwood Drive, and Taft Street. Included another \$50,000 in the operating budget to assess the inventory and condition of sidewalks, crosswalks and curbcuts across the City (funded with speed camera revenue).
- Included 0.5 FTE in the FY09 operating budget for a civil engineer to assist with sidewalk design and other pedestrian safety measures citywide (funded with speed camera revenue).

4. Enhance Neighborhood Appearance

- Implemented the Vacant Properties Ordinance adopted by the Mayor and Council that limits to 90 days the amount of time that vacant properties can remain boarded up. Code Enforcement identifies properties that do not comply and works with the owners to bring them into compliance. Owners who do not comply are issued a Notice of Violation. Three cases are currently open in the areas east of Route 355. Code Enforcement staff are tracking progress to ensure compliance with the Ordinance at those three addresses.
- Improved the appearance of the Mart at Stonestreet and Reading Ave. by requiring removal of illegal advertisement signs, cleaning the area around the building and improved trash management.

- Targeted monitoring by Commercial Code Enforcement of the Twinbrook Mart and Twinbrook Shopping Center, resulting in closing off the entry to the lower level (old bowling alley) and power washing the sidewalk at the Twinbrook Shopping Center.
- Repaired the N Stonestreet/Veirs Mill Rd Pedestrian Bridge, including treated and stained the wood boards, repainted metal rails, rebuilt crumbling steps, trimmed trees, cleared trash, repaired fencing, and removing graffiti as needed.
- Worked with the County and SHA to coordinate improvements to the roadway, sidewalk, bus stops and median in the area around the Twinbrook Mark and Twinbrook Shopping Center. Developed a design to improve landscaping on Veirs Mill Road between the two centers. Landscaping will be installed after SHA completes the repaving of Viers Mill Road this fall.
- Landscaped the open space at the corner of Grandin Ave and Reading Ave.
- Pruned a total of 1,041 street trees on the east side of Route 355 to clear limbs from sidewalks, streets and streetlights and to improve the health of the trees. Removed 327 trees that were diseased or had other structural problems.
- Since the spring of 2006 through this fall's planting, approximately 394 trees will have been planted on City property in neighborhoods east of Route 355.
- Coordinated with WMATA to remove graffiti and stray shopping carts from the area around the Twinbrook Metro Station.

5. Upgrade and Improve Infrastructure

- Replacing water pipes on Lewis Avenue (construction underway), Highland Avenue and Matthews Drive (design underway) to improve the rate of water flow to homes and fire hydrants.
- Completed the Alsace Lane and Rockcrest Park stream restoration projects to repair erosion damage to the streams.
- Improved drainage on the playing fields and open space in Maryvale Park by improving stormwater management facilities.
- Improved drainage and reduced flooding at Longwood and Pinewood by upgrading a storm drain and underground pipes.

6. Conduct Outreach and Respond to Specific Needs

The 2007 Citizen Survey provided useful general feedback to staff about resident needs across the City. To hear directly from residents about neighborhood needs, staff also initiated more communication in two small geographic areas east of Route 355:

- The area bounded by McAuliffe Drive, Bradley Ave, MacDowell St/Guenther Ct, and Twinbrook Parkway (Twinbrook neighborhood)
- The area bounded by Crabb Avenue, Charles Street, Park Road and North Horners (East Rockville neighborhood)

The goal was to learn and address specific needs of a smaller cohort of residents and to meet and engage residents who have not interacted with the City in the past. A multi-department team formed to communicate with the residents and provide “customized” response to needs. The work with McAuliffe residents began with a community meeting in the neighborhood. Staff followed up by stepping up commercial code enforcement activities at the shopping center and increasing police presence at the center.

A follow up meeting with McAuliffe area residents took place approximately two months later to continue the discussion and to get feedback on the work completed to date. The residents expressed appreciation for the focused attention and staff willingness to listen. They reported that the cleanliness at the shopping center had improved, that loitering was reduced and residents felt safer at and around the shopping center. The City also benefited by beginning relationships with some residents who had not previously interacted with the City.

Staff also reached out to residents in the Crabb Avenue area with staff visits to the neighborhood and a supplemental survey. Staff from multiple departments walked the streets and identified work to be completed to improve the neighborhood including tree trimming and code enforcement items. Staff also sent a one-page survey, to supplement the citywide survey, in order to gain a better understanding of residents’ specific needs. Seventy surveys were distributed and 21 were returned. Of the respondents, 99% reported that they are ‘Very Satisfied’ or ‘Satisfied’ with their neighborhood.

Responses to the question “What elements in your neighborhood are positive and enhance your quality of life?” included:

- Close to Metro
- Close to Town Center
- A walkable community
- Landscaping
- Improving Maryvale Park
- People are friendly
- Farmers Market on Saturday

Responses to the question “What do you think needs to be improved in your neighborhood?” included:

- Home appearance

- Cleanliness
- Lights in Maryvale Park
- Safety
- Provide multilingual information

Staff will continue to collect survey responses and will follow up on the suggested improvements.

The long-term goal of these efforts is to increase the levels of satisfaction and quality of life reported by residents. We believe that each interaction with a resident, each question answered and each service provided will move us toward better relationships with our customers and higher quality of life. Staff will invest time this fall in measuring the success of these two specific efforts and assessing next steps. That work will also help us determine the best way to respond to the results of the upcoming citizen survey.